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17 October 1962

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILE

SUBJECT: Conversation with General Eisenhower - Wednesday,  
17 October 1962

At President Kennedy's request I called on General Eisenhower today at 12:00 o'clock. Reviewed the Cuban developments. President Kennedy had asked that I carefully avoid indicating any particular line of action as none had been agreed upon, and this was observed.

I briefed Eisenhower on all aspects of the recent Cuban-Soviet build-up and showed him the U-2 pictures of three MRBM missile sites under development. Eisenhower expressed no particular surprise indicating that he felt this offensive build-up would probably occur.

He then expressed criticism of the Bay of Pigs failure and also the fact that we did not respond more energetically when Castro publicly embraced Communism.

With respect to the current situation, Eisenhower felt that it would prove to be intolerable, that its purposes can not be clearly defined, and that ~~the~~ discussions ~~and~~ adamant demands to either Khrushchev or Castro or both, would be of no avail.

In discussing blockades, he mentioned the difficulty of type of action we would take if and when a Soviet ship, laden with military hardware and personnel, is stopped on the high seas. The question he raised, as do I, is "What would we do with the ship then?"

Eisenhower questioned limited military action as being indecisive, irritating world opinion, creating fear in all areas where the Soviets could retaliate with limited action and therefore would be ~~indecisive~~. He recalled that when President Truman ordered limited air support in the first two or three days of the Korean war, he, Eisenhower, told the President that from a military standpoint this would not work and more decisive action was required.

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Throughout the conversation Eisenhower seemed to lean toward (but did not specifically recommend) military action which would cut off Havana and therefore take over the heart of the government. He thought this might be done by airborne divisions but was not familiar with the size of the Cuban forces in the immediate area, nor the equipment. Eisenhower seemed to feel that such a plan would be more decisive, would mean less bloodshed, could be accomplished more quickly than a landing and a conventional type of slow invasion.

I told General Eisenhower that I did not expect an answer but both the President and I wished him to be fully informed and that I would like to consult with him from time to time. He agreed to be available personally or by telephone at any time.

JOHN A. McCONE  
Director

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